

STAFF REPORT

DATE: October 5, 2022



TO: Governing Body

FROM: City Attorney

RE: Dividing City into Wards

Background: Council members requested information about how the City could be divided into wards in the future to represent different areas of the City.

1. The default position of State Statute requires cities of the second class be divided into wards:

14.101: The city council shall divide the city into wards, which shall be as equal in population as practicable, establish the boundaries thereof, and number the same, and when the population of any city exceeds 4,000 the number of wards shall not be less than four, and the number of wards in any city not exceeding eight thousand (8,000) in population shall not be more than four, except that any city now legally organized with more than four wards duly represented in the council shall not be affected by the provisions of this act. The territory of each ward shall be contiguous and compact.

Two council members shall be elected from each ward at the city election in odd-numbered years. Council members shall have terms of two years and until successors are elected and qualified.

Thereupon, except as is otherwise provided by law, the county election officer shall provide for registration of voters within 10 days.

2. However, Home Rule (Article 12 section 5 of Kansas Constitution) and Attorney General Opinion 267 both allow a city of the second class to adopt a charter ordinance exempting itself from 14.101 upon majority vote of council.
3. In July of 1998 The City of Bel Aire passed a charter ordinance exempting itself from the requirement to have wards and established 5 at large council seats.

1. Discussion: Does the City want to go back to having wards represented by each council member? If so Council will need to do two steps.

Council will first need to repeal relevant charters related to at-large districts

Secondly council will need to pass an ordinance dividing the city into **equally populated (generally) contiguous and compact districts.**